

STRENGTH AND RECOVERY

NO. 1805

A SERMON

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BY C. H. SPURGEON,

AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“And I will strengthen them in the Lord: and they shall walk up and down in His name, says the Lord.”
Zechariah 10:12.*

THIS text is pitched in the royal key. It has nothing of the caution and doubting of man about it. Where the word of a king is there is power, and this is the word of a King, indeed. It is the word of Jehovah, King of kings and Lord of lords, and you may know it by His sovereign style—“I will,” and “they shall.” Look at it. You sometimes say, “I will,” but you mistake your power, and your talk ferments into boasting. Never make your mouth longer than your arm, for that is monstrous. You have said, “I will,” but you cannot achieve your purpose, for you forgot to say, “If the Lord wills,” and that forgotten factor masters you. And when you say, “They shall”—ah, then you are out of your reckoning, for who are they that you can command? You cannot say it without question concerning your own children, nor your own wife, nor your own friend. The wills of men and women are wayward, and fickle, and if you calculate upon them you may soon find yourself at fault. Hesitate before you say, “They shall,” in reference to any of our liberty-loving race. Sometimes the word is no sooner spoken than you discover that you have provoked a “shall not.” Men are not to be ruled and governed just after that fashion. They are not like your boy’s chessmen, which he can move at his pleasure, and take in and out of the box whenever he likes.

Will and *shall* are not for us feeble beings. But the Lord has a right to the imperial style, and it is in order for Him to say, “I will,” and “they shall,” since He has the power to make good His words. This majestic speech is no novelty with Him. You will find it all through His covenant utterances. He speaks in the tone of omnipotence. He speaks like one who knows His own mind, and understands how to rule the minds of others. “Oh,” says one, “but men are free agents.” I never thought that they were not, although I am not sure that it is much to their gain that they are. The glorious privilege of the freedom of the will has been terribly overrated, it is a dangerous heritage which has already lost us Paradise, and will lose us all hope of heaven unless the mighty grace of God shall interpose. But, let it stand as it may, God is able to say of free will and of free agents, “I will,” and “they shall.” His government is such that without violating the nature of the creature that He has made, or putting upon it any physical constraint contrary to its own condition, He can accomplish His own purposes in all respects.

Grace knows how to work gently, quietly, yet potently, so that the most unwilling feel themselves sweetly constrained to be willing, and those who were most desperately opposed feel their hearts relenting and their spirits yielding to the divine purpose. The grace of God secretly melts down the ice, breaks to pieces the rock, and dissolves the adamant. The man’s obstinacy is broken, his rebellious spirit is melted, and yet the man remains entire, and cries with all his heart, “I will,” though a little before he had been stubborn and resolute. The “shall” of grace is mightier than the “I will” of pride. The will of the Lord leads the will of man in silken bonds, stronger than fetters of iron.

Do not be afraid of the sovereignty and omnipotence of divine grace, but, on the contrary, look to it as the last resource of a broken-down spirit. When there remains no strength in you, nor any ability of any kind or sort, then fling yourself upon the divine strength, and lay hold upon it, and rejoice that if God has said, “they shall,” then assuredly you will. I call your attention to this sovereign style on purpose, for there are many that exalt man in these days. He has become the god of modern idolatry. But as

for us, we have yet to speak on the behalf of God, and to lift up His name higher and higher, only wishing we had greater power with which to tell out the glory of the Ever Blessed who is Lord of all, who does as He wills in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

With that as a preface, let me call your attention to the very delightful promise of this text. It relates to the Jews, no doubt, and in them will have a form of fulfillment. In the first utterance of it, it relates to that nation, but every covenant promise that belongs to the seed of Abraham belongs to every believer, for believers are the truest seed of Abraham. These are the true Israel that worship God in spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh. In Christ Jesus there is neither Jew nor Gentile, circumcision nor uncircumcision. The inheritance is not according to the flesh, but it is according to the spirit, according to the promise, according to the grace of God and the power of God. Without the slightest hesitation each believer here may appropriate to himself this text as far as it suits his condition and necessity. "I will strengthen them in the Lord: and they shall walk up and down in His name, says the Lord." Observe the "says the Lord," like a great seal, confirming the charter. A "thus says the Lord" makes assurance doubly sure. You have here a word from the mouth of the Almighty. Be not afraid to feast upon the text, for by every word of God shall man live.

I. The first thing I see here is A SINGULAR FORM OF STRENGTH. "I will strengthen them *in the Lord*."

There are many forms of force and power, and men possess more or less of various kinds of strength, but this is a singular and special kind of energy. "I will strengthen them *in the Lord*." *Physical* strength is very desirable. What a blessing it is to be hale and strong, and healthy and vigorous! But a man may have gigantic force, and it may be a curse to him. He may use his bodily strength for the very worst of purposes; the brute within him may be the more brutish because it is so vigorous. The strongest man that ever lived was one of the unhappiest of men, through the temptation to which his vigorous flesh exposed him. Samson was the weakest as well as the strongest of men. Let no man glory in his bodily strength, for he is excelled in it by the horse, the ox, and the ass. Man has but to take iron and he can build for himself an engine which shall be stronger than thousands of men. There is nothing very noble in mere animal strength, though some glory in it, as though it made heroes of them—

*"How vain is man who boasts in fight
The valor of gigantic might."*

There is a higher strength which we call *mental* power—the energy of mind—certainly a very desirable talent. Yet men of great minds have descended to follies unworthy of the weakest. Remember Lord Bacon—"the greatest, meanest of mankind"? In several instances wide knowledge has been accompanied with the pettiest possible designs, and men who have seemed to equal angels in their intellect have verged upon devils in their motives. It is a sad thing that it should be so, but mental force without moral principle has become an engine of destruction, an instrument of mischief. Of all kinds of villains the educated villain is the most to be dreaded. The thief who knows nothing is readily captured, but he that is adroit and well-instructed baffles police, and plunders without making himself the victim of the law. It is not an unmixed blessing to possess unusual mental force. It involves great responsibility, and may therefore increase the guilt of its owner.

There is what I may call *official* strength, too—that strength which a man collects and vests in himself by reason of the position which he occupies, and this is not the highest order of power. The man is at the head of a body of men, and they become his forces. A leader finds strength in his following. By his influence he sways them, His word is law to them, He speaks, and they obey His utterances. They are ready to do everything or nothing, as he may choose. It is a great power, but oh, how frequently has it been misused for the purposes of the demagogue or of the tyrant! It is not, after all, a very desirable thing, for he that has it might almost wish to be without it, since it entails so much toil, anxiety, and care, and is so difficult to use aright. Well used it works to noblest results, but in the hands of one who is spiritually weak it is as dangerous as firearms in the grasp of children.

But the text speaks of a far higher form of strength than either of these. God says of His people, "I will strengthen them *in the Lord*." Oh that we might experience this process to the utmost degree! We

can never have too much of strength in the Lord. It is a thing so pure, so heavenly, so divine, that if we were strengthened till we became spiritual Samsons, if our minds were enlarged till we became spiritual Solomons, and if our influence over others were increased till we became commanders like David, strength from the Lord would fit us to wield the utmost measure of these lower forces. To be strengthened with strength in the Lord is of all things the most desirable.

But what is it? What is this kind of strength in the Lord? Does it not mean *a strength that comes distinctly and directly from God Himself*, and gives us a measure of the power with which God Himself is strong in spirit, so far as it is communicable to His creatures? God is strong in His will to accomplish good, strong in resolve, strong in love, strong in right, nothing can overcome Him, or turn Him aside from His purpose. He is strong morally, because He is infinitely holy, unquestionably just, and immutably good. Righteousness and integrity are the bulwarks of His kingdom. I speak of Him now, not as the eternal God alone in Himself, but as He is pleased to reveal Himself to us, in dispensations of law and gospel the supreme power of the Lord over the moral nature of man lies in His spotless perfection of character.

I notice that whenever the Lord strengthens a man with divine strength, it makes him *strong in faith*. He believes the promise, believes it intensely, makes a matter-of-fact of it, and he acts upon it. He does not stagger at the promise through unbelief, but he gives glory to God, and therefore he does and he dares what other men cannot do, what other men would not dare to do. Strengthened with an inward might, he learns to look at the word of God as sure, he takes it to be his daily food, and rejoices in it more than they that find great spoil.

In some men this strength from God takes the form of *great patience*. They have been severely tried, but they are not overcome. They have been cast down, but they have not been destroyed, they have been distressed, but they are not in despair. What a strong man was Job! I do not know where to point to a greater instance of the strength of God in man. He was stronger than enemies, fire, wind, and death. He was covered with boils, but his heart was not conquered. If any of you have felt even one of such horrible abscesses, you can guess what a torture it must be to have these boils upon one's skin from head to foot, and to scrape one's self with a potsherd. To have lost everything was comparatively a trifle, but to sit there in his sorrow and to be tortured, punctured as with a thousand needles, by his cruel friends, who so bitterly accused him of being a hypocrite, and yet to bless the Lord was no easy matter. Those critics who are of the same nature as Ham love to dilate upon Job's faults, for my part, I would go backward and cover them. The weakness of the man was seen, but still the divine power was gloriously conspicuous when the patriarch cried, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him." This is a kind of power which only God can give, and he that gets it is a spiritual giant in the esteem of those holy beings who know how to estimate the highest forces in the truest fashion.

The man who becomes strengthened by God himself becomes strong in *prayer*. You should see the man of God upon his knees. The posts of the doors of heaven move while he pleads with Jehovah. He is one that can cast his arms about the loins of the covenant angel, and give Him a throw; he will continue untiringly to contend with him, crying—

*"With You all night I mean to stay,
And wrestle till the break of day."*

When a man is thus strengthened he overcomes heaven by prayer. He carries the holy city by storm, he comes boldly to the throne of the Most High, on Jehovah's arm he lays his hand, and he cries to Him, "Even You, great God, shall hear the voice of my cry. Fulfill Your word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope. Do as You have said."

A man that is strengthened with such might as this *can face his fellow men* as bravely as Elijah met vacillating Israel upon Carmel. He exercises influence among his fellow men, for he moves among them as a being made superior to themselves. We sometimes read in history of the great bravery of the knights, and of their deeds of prowess, and so forth. I confess I think rather little of their so-called chivalry, considering their superior armor. When a man is boxed up in iron from head to foot, and his horse too, and is able to rush with his lance among hundreds of poor fellows wearing nothing but their com-

mon clothes, they may look at him as a great hero, but I do not see the amazing courage which he displays. I have more respect for the coat of mail than for the male who is coated in it. Far braver is it for the poor man whose name is never mentioned—the common soldier in the regiment—to dash into the fight. Far more honorable is it to wage spiritual war, not with flesh and blood but with spiritual wickedness, and to wage it not with iron and sulfur, but with love and truth. The child of God, without any derogation from his honor, is, when he is strengthened by God, like the knight in the midst of common soldiers. He is clad from head to foot in the armor of light, and he wields the sword of the Spirit, which is swift and sharp, when he speaks God speaks through him, and when he pleads with men God gives him the power that touches consciences and hearts, and conquers them with holy arguments. The man made strong by God for Himself becomes a mighty power among his fellow men.

It is a thing greatly to be desired that you and I should be strengthened by God's strength, for then we are *prepared to do the Lord's work effectually*. Do you not see the difference between quiet strength and fussy weakness? Do you not know brethren who appear to do a lot of work, but nothing ever comes of it, and sisters, too, that go fussing about, and accomplish nothing with great pains? You have seen another person who has said comparatively little, but his deeds have been eloquent. He wields the hammer of Thor, he gives one blow and thereby drives the nail right through, and with another he clenches it. Work is done by him in a moment which another talked of for twenty years. This is the real distinction among the servants of God—having power or not having power, and God here tells His people that, if they desire it and will have it, He will strengthen them in the Lord.

This kind of strength—very wonderful as it is to me, and as I think it must be to you—is *exceedingly useful* in all manner of ways. It is useful for our daily *walk*, work, and warfare. A man that is strong in the Lord is quiet and calm, he is not afraid of evil tidings, for “his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord”—and in this quietude lies his deliverance from fret and faint. He is not amazed when he is troubled on every side, for he knows that he will have to bear his share of affliction, and he accepts the will of God. He has bowed his heart by the grace of God to bear all that the Lord decrees. He feels that God is with him, that his strength will be equal to his day, that the all-sufficient God will supply all his need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus, and so he travels on serenely through this vale of tears. Half our fretting and quarrelling comes of our weakness. When a man is well he is not half so likely to be discontented with himself or to fall out with everybody else as he is when he is sickly or weak. God give you strength, dear friends, for your daily walk at home and abroad, for this will be to the comfort of those around you.

And then, besides our walk, we have our *work*, and we want strength for that. Whatsoever the Lord has called you to do, the power with which to do it must come from Him. “He renders to every man according to his work,” giving double power for double labor. You will not find the power in your natural abilities, neither can you attain it by imitating some successful man, but God Himself will grant you strength for every service to which He calls you.

Then, besides our walk and our work, there is a *warfare* going on. Alas! We have to fight with the world, the flesh, and the devil—foes without and foes within, but we shall be more than a match for all adversaries if we do but realize this text: “I will strengthen them in the Lord.” For all the battles which shall disturb us between here and heaven our strength is found in God Himself, and we may sweetly sing, “Jehovah is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation.”

Before I leave this point, I desire you to notice that *there is no limit set* in the text. “I will strengthen them in the Lord” is a general statement without a boundary. It does not say how far God will strengthen any one of us, and I would therefore encourage you to try how far you can be strengthened. When God sets a limit, do not go beyond it, but when there is none take brave leave to go as far as ever you can. You do not know, my dear young sister, how strong God can make you yet, go and ask for great grace, that you may be much more useful than you now are. Neither do you know, my young brother, just commencing life, how much the Lord may enable you to do, go to Him with a large measure in your hand, and ask Him to fill it, and make you fruitful in every good word and work. Some of us have been for years engaged in the Master's work, but I suppose we might have been tenfold stronger if we had

possessed more faith, more love, more zeal, more, in fact, of heavenly energy. For one, I should not like to go back over again to try if I could do better. I am perfectly satisfied to have come so far on the journey, and grateful for help given, but yet I am persuaded that I might have done better and accomplished more if I had sought more of the Holy Spirit and His power from on high. The weakest among us may yet be as David, and David may be as the angel of the Lord. There is a boundless field before the saints, God has opened the door and none can shut it. O for grace to enter in and possess the land! I would encourage a craving ambition with regard to spiritual strength. We cannot be too strong in the Lord. Get up, O babe, up on your Father's knee, and ask Him to make you a young man, and rise, O young man, and pray the Lord to make you a father in the midst of Israel, and a blessing to many, for we have not many fathers in the church of God. Aspire to live to the utmost of life's possibilities, and let this be the resolve of every brother and sister here—that, by God's grace, you will drink in as much of love, of life, of light, and of power from God as you can hold, and that you will endeavor to reflect as much of God's light and glory among the sons of men as He is pleased to bestow upon you. "I will strengthen them in the Lord." So much for that first point.

II. Now I want to come, in the second place, to a matter with which I have very great personal sympathy just now. "I will strengthen them in the Lord"—I call your attention here TO A VERY REMARKABLE OPERATION. Strength is given, of that we have spoken, but here is the giving of the strength, God Himself declaring that He will bestow it. The Lord Himself says, "*I will strengthen them.*" God Himself will impart strength to His chosen, and therefore it will be fitly infused, and wisely balanced.

I would say of this operation, that *it is painfully needed*. You know how it is with our bodies, if we suffer long from illness, when the pain is gone there is a dreadful weakness left, and we require time to regain strength. Restoration is a long process. The weakened limbs only recover strength by slow degrees. The man that long has tossed upon the weary bed of pain does not at once run and leap as he did before the chill hand of disease was laid upon him. You may crush in a moment, but you cannot so speedily cure. Our soul, like our body, is sometimes grievously diseased, and we fall into sin and backsliding, doubt and fear, lukewarmness and grief, and thus we are brought to death's door. Then it is that we need this text, "I will strengthen them in the Lord." Brother, your sin is forgiven by the grace of God, your great grief is taken from you by the kind application of the blood of Christ by the Holy Spirit, but you are dreadfully feeble, and can hardly crawl to the mercy seat. For you in this weakness this divine word is intended. Graciously it is adapted to you in your present low condition, "I will strengthen them in the Lord." You are very much emaciated; the Lord will feed you with heavenly food. You are out of order spiritually; the Lord will be your Physician. Have you been careless? Have you gone away from your God? Have you fallen into sin? Are you chill at heart? Do you long to be set right? Did you come into this place just now saying, "I wish I might get a blessing, for I feel so out of sorts that I hardly know whether I am a child of God or not"? Your heavenly surgeon is waiting to heal you. God, Himself, comes to you and says, "I will strengthen them in the Lord." He can help your infirmities till He has helped you quite out of them. Is it not written "then shall the lame man leap as a hart"? Are not men of faith "out of weakness made strong" so that they put to flight the armies of the alien? Jehovah Rophi can commence tonight that blessed process by which every trembling member of your spiritual frame shall be braced up, and you shall arise and put on strength.

"Oh, but," you say to yourself, "if I do not grow better than I now am spiritually, I know that I shall get worse, for there is no standing still." This is quite true, and I would warn some here who are living far away from God that they must return from their backsliding, or else there will be bad times ahead for them. You who pray so little had need at once to watch and pray. You are children of God, but you do not read your Bibles diligently, and you hardly know what communion with Christ means. You are also idle, and indifferent in reference to holy endeavors, and somewhat loose in your manners, and lax in your company. Am I not coming home to some of you? I wish to be personal and faithful. Are you not spiritually sick at this time? I refer to certain who are here present. You are weak, and you will probably grow weaker and weaker till you will be as the bruised reed and as the smoking flax, useless and even

obnoxious. Do you wish it to be so? Do you not dread falling by little and little? What is needed is that, at this very time, you should come to a turning point, quit your decays, and begin to strengthen the things which remain which are ready to die. Oh, what some of us ought to have been by now! For my own part, I blush and will say no more. Confusion of face covers me that I should have so many advantages and yet grow so slowly. But oh, brothers and sisters, may not shame come to some of you? You have been children of God for thirty or forty years, and are no more than babes even now. You are poor examples to others notwithstanding all that God has done for you, done in you, and done by you. After all the manifestations of His love to you, and the tenderness of His dealings with you, your poor unworthy return cannot be mentioned without tears. Come, we must turn over a new leaf, or, rather, we must get a taste of the leaves of the tree which are for the healing of the nations, that we may revive out of decline.

This strength is *faithfully promised*, and the promise will be assuredly performed. “I will strengthen them in the Lord.” God never said, “I will,” without intending it, His promises are His purposes. Christ has set a “Yes and Amen” on every promise of the Father, and each one is sure as the truth of Jehovah. Lay hold on the promise. It is as sure as God lives. He is able to strengthen you, He is willing to strengthen you, and He will effectually do it in answer to prayer.

This strength shall be *divinely bestowed* upon you; it shall come directly from the Holy Spirit. He that made you live at the first shall make you live more vigorously, for Christ came not only that we might have life, but that we might have it “more abundantly.” If you want more life, go where you received your first life—to Him of whom we spoke the other Sabbath day, who says, “I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” [See No. 1799, “*Though He Were Dead.*”]

Perhaps that strength will be *gradually received*. I am an example tonight in my physical frame, of what you will experience in your spiritual frame, for I find that I do not recover strength very rapidly. Yet it is so sweet every morning for the hands to do a little that they could not do yesterday, and for the feet to be able to walk a yard or two farther than a few days ago. A little progress is a great gift to one who has long lain on his bed. Some of you may never have felt gratitude to God of the kind that has come to me, I have been thankful for the power to lift my foot from the ground, thankful for being able to turn over in bed, thankful for being able to stand upright, though leaning heavily upon my staff. The Lord is frequently pleased to strengthen His people little by little that they may prize the blessing and be all the more careful to retain it. Yet the Lord can make the weak ones strong in a moment, and raise them at once from bed to battle, from lukewarmness to ardor. Yet wonder not if recovery should be slow, but as you grow a little stronger, and a little stronger, acknowledge in each increase of strength that the Lord has a new claim on your affection.

Now, one of the signs of His strengthening His people is, as it is with the body, that they display a growing appetite—men who are mending find themselves hungry between meals. “Oh,” the doctor says, “That is a capital sign. You will get on now.” I love to see God’s people when the Lord is strengthening them, for then they leave off being dainty and fault-finding, and prove the truth of Solomon’s proverb, that to the hungry man every bitter thing is sweet. Then they come to Monday night prayer meetings and week evening services. They used to be able to do very well from Sunday to Sunday, and I have known some of them get on with one meal on the Lord’s day, and like it all the better if it were quickly served and soon over. When the gracious Lord strengthens His people they become very sharp set. Somebody said on Sunday morning to me, “Did you not feel it sweet preaching?” I replied, “I always feel it sweet preaching the gospel of the grace of God.” “Ah, but,” he said, “The people swallowed it all just as it came from your mouth, and they seemed so hungry after it.” Truly this makes a preacher happy. Feasts go well when the guests are famishing, at the table of mercy we prefer eaters to grumblers. Anybody can preach when everybody is drinking it in with his eyes and his ears, and all his heart. I have not to ask for people’s attention, because they give it of their own accord, and then the good there may be in the sermon is appreciated, for hungry souls do not let a crumb fall to the ground. When people are being strengthened of God, they are not content with one meal on the Sabbath; they want another, and perhaps

a prayer meeting or a Sunday school for a dessert. They are not content with just two or three minutes' prayer in the morning, they like if they can to slip out of business and get a word with God in the middle of the day. They delight to carry a text of Scripture in their memories to sweeten their breath all the day, and they cannot be happy unless they meditate upon the word. I think you make a great mistake when you go galloping through the whole Bible, reading half-a-dozen chapters every day, you do much better when you get a text and ruminate upon it, just as the cows chew the cud. Turn the Scripture over, and over, and get all the juice, sweetness, and nourishment out of it and you will do well. The spiritually hungry man says, "I must go and hear some servant of God, and hear what God, the Lord, will speak to me. I must get as much of the heavenly food as I possibly can, for I need it so greatly." So the Lord strengthens us by His own ordinances, putting honor upon the means of grace, and giving to His servants the high privilege of feeding those who have become hungry through restoring grace.

It is *a very delightful thing* when the divine Lord begins to strengthen His people. I pray for some of you, that He may do it in your cases. You have been very wretched and miserable, have you not? When you are strengthened from on high you begin to feel a greater joy, and oh, a little joy is so sweet to a soul that has been much cast down, you have not obtained assurance yet, but you have a growing faith which is precious. Now and then a glint of sunlight comes into your soul, and this is much to one who has long sat in darkness. You have begun talking to somebody about Christ, yes, and you are interested in another prisoner of hope who is in the same state that you have so lately escaped from. I like that. Now, the chapter that you did not dare to read, because it seemed to threaten you so much, you now read without alarm, the black cloud breaks with silver showers of blessing upon you. Now you venture to ask for blessings in prayer that you never dared to seek before, and you receive them and are made exceedingly glad. All heaven opens to your knock, and your desire to pray is greatly increased. The Lord will glorify Himself by you yet by His great grace, for He is already making the weakling strong. He will continue to invigorate you till you shall mount up with wings as eagles, run and not be weary, walk and not faint. Think of such a poor mouse as you that was never happy till you got down into your hole, being able to mount up on wings into the heavenly places, once so far above your hopes. You will do it, you will do it, and you will be perfectly safe up yonder in those elevations which once seemed to be dizzy heights. God will give you such broad wings, and such bright eyes, that you will face the sun and exult in his burning glories. Do not be afraid, but be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. The strength of your faith shall breed strength of expectation, that expectation shall lead you to grasp that which God is prepared to give, and you shall thus rise height upon height, nearer and nearer to your God, strengthened in the name of the Lord.

III. But time fails and I must therefore finish with my third point. We have spoken of a singular strength, and a remarkable operation, and now we will speak of A SATISFACTORY RESULT. "And they shall walk up and down in His name, says the Lord."

"Walk up and down." It means *activity*. They shall be on the move, and no longer hug the sluggard's pillow. They shall get to work; they shall do business in the streets of the New Jerusalem. They shall be making progress; they shall be traversing fields of truth, and gathering choice spices, and fruits. Instead of lying prone they shall walk up and down.

The phrase implies *ease* and security. People do not walk up and down when they are afraid for their lives, or when they are under pressure to keep an engagement, and are in hot haste to be on time. No, "they shall walk up and down" in secure but active pleasure. The Lord gives to His people, when He makes them strong, a happy, joyful activity. It shall be a joy for them to do what the Lord bids them to do, for He is no taskmaster, He does not set us to make bricks without straw. He does not drive us like slaves, but He blesses us as sons. He represents Himself as treating His people as a good farmer would do who drove his plowing oxen to the end of the field, and turned them round, and then drove them to the end again, but when they had worked for the due time he did not overwork them, but allowed them to stand still, while he fed them, and took the yoke from their shoulders and the bit from between their jaws. I like to see horses with their nosebags, resting and feeding, the Lord gives His people a nosebag every now and then, and they stand and enjoy themselves by feeding upon heavenly food. These are the

people that do the work. Not your law-driven people, who are told to work for life and toil for their own salvation. They do just nothing at all, but those who are saved, and made strong in the sense of their salvation, and mighty through contact with the almighty God—these are they that go up the field and down the field, working on and on to good purpose. These are to be found steadfast and unwearied; always abounding in the work of the Lord, because they have experienced that in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength.

There is a delicious *freedom* about this walking up and down in the name of the Lord. They do not fly from notice like timid fawns, “He that believes shall not make haste.” They do not come out of their dens and then hurry back again like hunted foxes, but they walk in comfort, as citizens upon the bulwarks of a city, taking their airings in the morning and in the evening, defying the foe, if foe there is. They are not afraid, neither are they under constraint. It is a blessed thing when God makes you so strong that you walk at liberty. “If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.” There is no freedom like that which the free Spirit works in the free children of the ever-blessed God.

There seems to me to be the idea of *perseverance* about all this. This walking up and down in the name of the Lord means keeping at it, going on from day to day, and week to week, and year to year. I see a brother sitting in this house tonight who used to come to me at one time with a huge iron collar round his neck, and he also wore manacles upon his hands and fetters upon his feet, so that he was a miserable object. I tried to cheer and comfort him, but it was to little purpose for he was a prisoner in the innermost dungeon and his heart failed him, for he feared he should die in the prison house. Here he sits tonight, and I believe that he is as happy as anybody living, for the Lord has set him at liberty and put new strength into him. I trust that he is so truly restored that for many and many a year he will walk up and down in the name of the Lord as happy as all the birds of the early summer tide. The Lord has made him strong, and I pray that he may continue so, and be a helper to others. We do get down sometimes, but when the Lord comes and makes us strong, we soon get up again, and peace succeeds to war. We are not always in a storm; occasionally we enjoy a long stretch of smooth sailing. A wet sheet and a fair wind, and away the vessel goes, making headway as she never did before. It is not good to be altogether without trials. How sweet your food is after your mouth has been rinsed out with quinine! When you know the wormwood and the gall, then the joy of the Lord is as heaven below. Up and down walking brings a wide experience which is better than monotony.

I would encourage every child of God to aspire to the strength that God is able to give him. Let him place himself under the operations of the Spirit of God, and when he has felt the inward invigoration let him walk up and down in the name of the Lord, taking healthy exercise in divine things.

Some of you cannot do that. You first need to be made alive unto God. The dead cannot gather strength or walk up and down. I do not ask *you* to pray for strength, but to cry for life. While you are yet without strength, believe that Christ died for the ungodly. With all your weakness and your death, trust in Him who said, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” When you have found Christ, you shall learn what a godlike life is to be found in Him. May the omnipotent God impart His own boundless power to you according as you have need, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—PSALM 23.
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—23 (VERSE 2), 214, 119 (SONG 2).**

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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